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GOVT. MEDICAL DIPLOMA HOLDER

KAVIRAJ NAGENDRA NATH SEN,

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The Place of Philosophy in MODERN CULTURE.

Has Philosophy any real grounds to stand upon, anything positive to contribute to our knowledge and education, any weapons to furnish us with in the battle of life? Or, is it merely the creation of idle brains, the luxury of happy-go-lucky sort of men, merely burdening us with theories, without helping us any way in the struggle for existence and march of progress? The object of this short paper will be to answer this question and to show therefrom what a place Philosophy occupies in modern culture, and, for the matter of that, in the culture of all ages. To help us to clear understanding of the problem and to arrive at a satisfactory solution of it, we must first of all understand what Science and Philosophy respectively are, and how they stand related to the problems of life and culture.

It is the general notion now-a-days, that Science stands diametrically opposed to Philosophy, and that the two have nothing in common between them. Science, it is said, moves in a straight line and is continually progressive, Philosophy moves in a circle, and is stationary and unprogressive. Science, we are told, gives us knowledge of this and that, adds to the world of experience, while Philosophy, roaming widely in the field of imagination, loses itself in the quagmires of theories and ideas, in its vain attempt to lift the veil off the supernatural and peep into the mysteries of the vast, unsearchable region beyond human experience. But, a little reflection will show that such ideas are entirely erroneous and blind us to the real issues of our problem. Neither is Science synonymous with knowledge, nor Philosophy equivalent to fancies and dreams. The real nature of the two will show us that they are not so mutually exclusive as we think them to be.

Science is that which gives us some sort of systematized knowledge, which is an attempt to understand and explain some portion of the world of our experience. It is evident, then, that there are sciences, many and various. The world of our experience is large enough ; and Science, for the sake of convenience and to suit its purpose, divides knowledge into various branches and treats each of these separately. Thus, we have the Science of Astronomy dealing with stars and planets, the science of Physiology dealing with respiration, circulation of blood and other functions of the human body, the Science of Physics dealing with matter and its properties, and so on. Science, thus, raises artificial walls in the domain of knowledge, pigeon-holing this kind of knowledge here and that elsewhere.

But, if we had stopped short here, our knowledge would have been most imperfect. True, a particular group of laws governs one particular group of objects, and another, another : but, how is the one group related to the other, and, for the matter of that, how are all the different groups of objects, which the various different sciences treat of, related to each other? Are they all different, disparate, discrete units of knowledge, having no common tie to bind them together? Is the world a mere jumble of unconnected phenomena? Or, is there a common link between all of them, a common thread that passes through all the so-called separate beads of knowledge, making them into a beautiful rosary, fit to be associated with the divine? And, it is for Philosophy to show that there *is* a link, a unity that pervades all so-called different departments of knowledge. Philosophy is no idle dream, no fanciful imagination of the idle brain. Pythagoras is reported to have said, "In life, the vulgar seek fame and money, the philosophers truth." Philosophy is, in fact, essentially a *search for truth*—an *attempt to understand the world as a whole*. As such, it gives the unity to all the different sciences. It does not exclude any of them, but, including and embracing them all, enunciates a principle of *unity* in the light of the *truth*, of which all our knowledge is the expression. When the sciences, arbitrarily dividing the world of experience into different groups, become blind to the world as a whole, paying all their attention to the particular departments they respectively deal with, Philosophy teaches them that *existence is essentially one* and that the arbitrary divisions of Science are not absolute, but merely pragmatic. Thus, we find that the general notion that the Sciences stand opposed to Philosophy, is altogether a mistaken one ; the real fact being that, treating, as they do, of the different *aspects* of knowledge, they are but parts of a uniform system, of a *universitates scientiarum* and have all ultimately to surrender to Philosophy, which, aiming at such a system, gives *unity* to them, to make them constitute knowledge properly so-called, and not merely scattered, distinct, isolated pieces of information, which would

be altogether useless, without the link or connexion supplied, and the unity stamped on them, by Philosophy. To speak figuratively, reality is a great riddle put to the human mind. Each separate science offers data for determining the answer. Philosophy attempts to solve, to find the key to, the *mysterium magnum*.

Now, then, if knowledge be the aim of the present age, we find how Science and Philosophy are both essential to our purpose. We cannot give an undue prominence to one, to the total exclusion of the other. *Each is essential to the other; and either, by itself, would be imperfect.* The various sciences, treating of the various departments of human experience, give us facts and laws peculiar to each of them, and the task of Philosophy begins at this point. Philosophy collects all the informations supplied by the various sciences; and without keeping them in a disparate, unconnected state, connects and co-ordinates them according to some principle of unity, rejecting all that is purely accidental, and absorbing into it the common elements, those that throw light on the single, absolute truth that pervades the universe. In the light of this unity of absolute truth alone do all the different facts and laws supplied by the different sciences become intelligible. Otherwise, as has been already said, they would remain a chaotic, confused congeries of impressions, their meaning, in relation to each other, being utterly unintelligible. *The synthesis of individual experiences, supplied by the special sciences, into a whole of knowledge, is only possible by Philosophy.* The relation, then, of the sciences and Philosophy may best be expressed by saying that Philosophy without the sciences is empty, and without Philosophy the sciences are blind. But, in the same way as, in the field of cognition, the sense and the understanding though both essential, the superiority is yet assigned to the faculty of understanding,—even so, in the field of knowledge, notwithstanding that the special sciences and Philosophy are both necessary, the higher place must yet be given to Philosophy.

The superiority of Philosophy lies in this that while each of the Sciences hypostatizes *one* element of truth Philosophy alone is alive to *all* its various aspects. Philosophy knows that existence being essentially one, the artificial boundaries, created by the special sciences, are but illusory; that *one* principle of unity finds expression in everything, and that the highest knowledge, therefore, that man can aspire to, is the knowledge of this universal, absolute, unitary, ultimate principle or truth, revealing itself in all human experience. In all provinces of investigation, Philosophy, not content with a superficial shallow view of things, goes to the very root of all things, and penetrating beneath the surface show, finds out at last the ultimate meaning and essence. Each science, engaged in some particular investigation of its own, forgets the higher unity embracing all diversity, and, in its enthusiasm for the particular, loses the wood

in the trees. But, the vocation of Philosophy is to know how the unitary principle of reason and truth manifests and evolves itself in nature, in the human mind, in all social institutions, in the history of nations and in the progressive advancement of the world.

Progress, it has been contended, is the principal aim of the age, and that it is Science and not Philosophy that helps us on our way to it. True indeed that Science greatly helps us in the material progress of the world ; but, why blind yourself to the other side of the shield ? Organization is the chief and important factor in all progress, and this is taught by Philosophy. Science, in its eagerness to know, goes on collecting individual facts and laws : but Philosophy directs our steps to co-ordinate these into a systematic unity, without which they would be useless. Objects and events, and their laws we get from Science no doubt, but, their *ultimate meaning* is given by Philosophy : for, Philosophy discovers not what *seems*, but, what *is* and *why* it is. All that is rational, all that is real, Philosophy claims to treat of. Hence, Philosophy is of the prime importance in our life, and the positive sciences occupy only a subordinate place : for, there is no province of human experience, nothing in the whole realm of reality, to which philosophical investigation does not extend.

Then again, we want to obtain a knowledge of the world we live in, and it is said, positive sciences help us here more than Philosophy. But, the fallacy here will be evident on a little reflection. Science can never successfully come to a satisfactory understanding of the world as a whole. In its futile attempts to explain the universe, we generally find it involved in an explanation, which is, to use the old scholastic phrase, *obscurum per obscuris*—an explanation of the obscure by what is more so. The explanation by atoms will be an example on the point. Life, organic and inorganic, matter, the universe itself, and in fact, every thing is involved in deep mystery—springing, as they do, out of the depths of the infinite, and as mysteriously disappearing into it. And, it is Philosophy and Philosophy alone that traces the mystery far enough, and binding together the objects and events in the links of necessary thought, “finds their last ground and reason in that which comprehends and transcends all,—the nature of God himself,” and thus gives the rest, the repose, the peace, the satisfaction to the human mind, which it stood in need of. For, the human mind is essentially a unity, and in the light of this unity alone are all the phenomena of the world intelligible. It is the lamp, so to speak, which illuminates and explains the universe ; and it is Philosophy which discovers this fact to us.

Human life, again, is the noblest manifestation of God, and a true insight into its meaning alone is what can lead us to the proper track in the development and progress of humanity. The progress of man is essentially through

the development of ideas. High and noble ideas spring in us, and, in so far as these are realized, does man ascend one rung in the ladder of progress. And, it is Philosophy that by explaining human life in the light of the divine principle, collates and co-ordinates these ideas, arranges them in their proper order, and then leads them on to their perfect realization.

Philosophy is of immense use to us in our everyday life too. Amidst encircling glooms of darkness and despondency, of trials and misfortunes, it is Philosophy that props up our failing strength, and cheers up our drooping spirits. For, one and every event, that darkens the horizon of life, may seem trying to a degree, when taken by itself; but, Philosophy, connecting all of them with the vast, concatenated series of phenomena of our lives, takes away the sting from them. When Philosophy thus teaches us to look at them as mere links in the great chain of our life and experience, of works and effects, they appear quite harmless, their nature is softened down, and we can move on in the path of progress, nothing daunted. For, we can then take them in the proper spirit, either as *Karmaful* or the result of our actions of this or of any previous birth, or as illusions, or as really good though apparently evil, as different men would have it. Thus, from pragmatic considerations too, Philosophy is the solace and comforter of our lives, as the great sage of Greece said. It enables us to see through the meaning of life, and says to the weary traveller on the path of life—

“A sacred burden is this life ye bear,
Look on it, lift it, bear it solemnly,
Stand up and walk beneath it steadfastly,
Fail not for sorrow, falter not for sin,
But, onward, upward, till the goal ye win.”

Philosophy thus enables us to understand ourselves, our neighbours, and the world; and keeping before it always the ideal of unity and universality, leads us to a proper understanding of everything, thus enabling us to adjudge our actions in practical life. Giving us a true insight into the meaning of life, it awakens us to a full sense of our responsibility, and leads us on to the development of a true and real manhood. Philosophy is, thus, the self-consciousness of human reason at large, and without it, man's life would be reduced to the level of mere mechanical brute existence. In the language of Socrates, then, we might conclude, “a life, without Philosophy, is not worthy to be lived by man.”

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BISHOP HEBER.

How fast would evening fail,
In green Bungala's palmy grove,
Listening the nightingale.

Bishop Heber's is a name which is not very familiar to us, and no wonder. An English clergyman who had no very high claims to the dignified distinction of a poet, or a powerful writer, but, who was chiefly taken up with his humble duty of preaching the Gospel in this country, need not be well-known to us, nor are we much to blame for this. True, he would sometimes stray into the domains of poetry and Literature, but, his literary attempts never rose above mediocrity. Still, I know not why I always feel a keen pleasure in reading and listening to the naive and impassioned verses of Heber and specially to those in which he has sung of the sylvan, rural beauty of our dear motherland. Often have I repeated to myself, when in a lovely place or by a rippling stream, the lines of Heber—sweet, though simple to barrenness:—

Our task is done on Ganga's breast,
The sun is sinking down to rest,
And moved beneath the tamarind bough,
Our bark has found its harbour now.
Upon her deck with charcoal gleams,
The Moslem's savoury supper teams ;
While, all apart beneath the wood,
The Hindu cooks his simpler food.

* *

O'er the brake, so wild and fair,
The betel waves his crest in air ;
With pendent train and rushing wings,
Aloft the gorgeous peacock springs."

These lines show clearly what an eye for beauty Heber possessed—beauty not in her gaudy and rich, but in her most simple, garments—beauty not of Albion or Caledon, his own country, but of Bengal, which is ours.

To Englishmen, who come out to India, but never go out a step beyond the metropolis, and the big provincial capitals, India is a land of tigers and hyenas, reptiles and poisonous worms, and of savages equally ferocious and dangerous. Excepting a few towns established by the English, she is represented as full of uncles situated on marshy grounds, which exhale noxious vapours by night and day.

After such descriptions of our country, how soothing it is to our feelings to come across a civilized Englishman, idealising a country and pouring forth the raptures of his heart at the sight of the rugged beauty of a land which his brethren had painted in rather black colours !

No artist builds in a style he does not like and admire, and no poet commemorates in verse anything he does not love. Bishop Heber, it seems to me, loved Bengal, if any Englishman ever did. What Englishman ever wrote to his wife?—

“If thou wert by my side, my love,
How fast would evening fail
In green Bungālā's palmy grove,
Listening the nightingale.
If thou, my love, wert by my side,
My babies at my knee,
How gaily would our pinnacle glide
O'er Gangā's minuc sea.

What Englishman could ever refer to the beauty of *Bengal* in terms like the following?

“So rich a shade, so green a sod,
Our English fairies never trod.”

On the solemn, still evening, when the sleeping village wakes up in devotional excitement, on what other Englishman's ears did the sounds of the drum and the blow of the conch die so sweetly away?

“Still as we pass in softened hum
Along the breezy alleys come
The village song, the hum, the drum.”

Few even of our Bengali poets have such an idea of the simple and naked beauty of our country, except in the abstract. They have read of it in romances and novels, but few, I am afraid, have seen and felt what beauty unparalleled there is in the damp, marshy forest, where the bamboo-tree swings to and from in the humid breeze, where the banian tree, hoary with a hundred years of heat and rain, spreads heavenwards its tall branches, what purity and love surround the low, thatched college of the poor Indian villages only one Bengali poet has but recently seen and felt this celestial beauty of our motherland, and has voiced his feelings in some of his song:—“*Amār Sonār Banglā, āmi tomāi bhālō bāsi, chira din tōmār ākās, tōmār vātās āmār prāṇē bajāi bāsi*” etc.

Bishop Heber was a christian clergyman and most of his poems are written in celebration of christian festivals, though he has often touched upon other subjects also. These are of no particular interest to us. It is his two small poems on ‘*Bāngala*’ that especially appeal to us, not because they have any great poetic excellence, but because they breathe a spirit and show a love of our country, which, I believe, is to be found nowhere else in the whole range of English poetry.

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“In the Study.”

FAUST.

(*From An Oriental Standpoint*).

My own admiration for this master-work of Goethe's is so considerable, that I am afraid to trust myself to give expression to it in a short space, for fear of being a blind enthusiast. If this admiration peeps out occasionally, in spite of myself, and savours of the hyperbolic, I can only plead—Wait, wait until the work has been read, interpreted, and carefully meditated upon.

The nascent Romanticism which has been universally fathered upon the German duumvirate, Schlegel and Lessing, was not antagonistic in principle or origin, to that larger and wider intellectual movement, which, in its persistent efforts to assimilate Hellenic culture, had helped, and, in fact, necessitated the truth of a Goethe in European Literature. Goethe, to my mind, is not an anomaly, with due deference to many of his able biographers who have maintained so. He may not have *represented*, but he undoubtedly *reacted on*, the Germany of his day.

Tremendous intellectual powers are requisitioned to enable one to rise superior to, and create, one's own environment. *Faust* has a peculiar interest, apart from its highest assets, as a triumph of creative effort, as being the record of a momentous psychological struggle, as deep and as extensive as life itself. The hero has been generally identified with the author, and the striking similarity, even in name, between the heroine of the poem and the Gretchen of history has practically obviated all controversy as to the identity of the former. It is, in short, the history of a terrible wrangling between *Idealism and Materialism*, and the final triumph of the former over the latter. Faust embodies in himself the best and highest of what European culture, in those days, could impart to a man. The peculiar situation in which we find him in the opening scene, coupled with the weird suggestions of the night, of the curious variety of his intellectual pursuits and the highly interesting background of a thick-skinned, but learning-infatuated *Wagner*, is but symbolical of the unquenchable thirst after knowledge, which the Renaissance had brought into being, and the superstition of the age repressed. In his irrepressible aspirations after higher things, he frets at even the frailest barriers which the wisdom of the society had erected against pitfalls, and unhesitating opens the book of magic with a hand that trembles not. Here, we think, we have a feeble deference of the irregular life the author lived. Idealism is inseparable from Optimism.

Mephistopheles does not seem, to me, to represent the evil principle of Christian dualism, as has been generally supposed. He symbolizes the material side of human nature with its earthly promptings, which, in fact, is a perpetual clog upon the higher impulses of our being. His first acquaintance with the idealistic enthusiast, which eventually terminated in the execution of the fateful bond, is typical of the easy descent from idealism to materialism, and the emotional excesses which the latter leads to. But still, a higher nature of the type of Faust's is not carnalized with the facility one might associate with a devil's performances. The first time he is introduced into the sensual sty, Faust starts at the horrid stench, and hurries out of it with an ill-concealed chagrin. A bit daunted, full of misgivings and diffidence, but, hurried with an *irresistible* impulse, which is the pith of his real nature, nay, with a cheerful exterior, his companion leads him on, and tries the effect of a stronger dose. It takes effect, and the rejuvenescence takes place. The "witch scene," in which the transformation of Faust has been wrapped up in such enigmatical cover, that almost all the commentators of "Faust" are utterly helpless, and many of them have tried to evade the difficulty by stigmatizing it as intentional nonsense; and a gentle rebuke which Goethe administered to his supersubtle admirers has been tortured into such an admission. The object of this scene is to make Faust a man, who "has scorned delights and lived laborious days" until he is sick at once of science and life at a mature period of his existence, to have the feelings which, had his career been normal, he would have already, in a measure, survived. It must be a strong potion that can make such a dessicated closet-student lose the consciousness of thirty years of existence. Now, the genius, who could efface this, could hardly be a *male* genius like Mephistopheles. The character must be symbolized as a *female* power, and must be the mistress of all the mysterious ingredients that go to the influencing of the human heart. And, although she may have learnt her lesson from the restless spirit that is ever goading humanity into action, the potion will require the patient cooking of ages to bring it to maturity. *Mephistopheles is unreal, the witch is real.* What can she be, then, but the organic impulse of passion, and, above all, sexual passion, which has taken ages on ages to evolve, that mysterious agency which is "deep-seated in our mystic frame," which, unbalanced by the intellectual nusus, is an over-powering material organism, and, as such, may be said to be of devil-origin. That this organism is no simple thing, but, compounded of numberless subleworking ingredients, physical and psychical, is perfectly true; and the dry, critical understanding, as typified by Mephistopheles, is certainly impotent to evoke it. This seems to me to be the whole meaning of the witch-scene.

Henceforth, the descent is much smoother, and the precipice is unbroken.

But, Faust has not yet arrived at the greatest psychological crisis of his life. The meeting with Gretchen and the subsequent incidents are but the natural adjuncts of the scene we have just witnessed. Faust has had his pleasure and the dire necessity too thrust upon him, as a consequence of laying low the nearest in blood to the beloved one herself. He must perforce, abandon her now, and the memory of the recent deed be obliterated ; he must plunge into the world, must drown all recollections in the wildest excitement. In that world, where nothing is seen aright, in the conclave of perverted minds, corrupted natures, enticing sirens, illuminated only by the half-light of sophistry and self-pleasure—that is the place where Faust's better self hurries him, and where he will try to drink a deep draught of the waters of Lethe.

Next comes the spiritual crisis, which is the pivot of the whole poem. In the midst of his sensual enjoyments, suddenly the memory of his past life smites him with irresistible force, and reminds him of one deserted without a word, possibly abandoned to ignominy and despair. The sudden impulse of his better nature spends itself out in impotent ravings at Mephistopheles, and though at the ineffably tender scene that follows, there is a desperate attempt to mend matters and to revert to his former life, he finds, to his unutterable grief, that it is too late. But the voice from above, exculpating the fated object of his passion, is unmistakable, and the dying echo which closes the scene is staggering in its pathos and tenderness.

The tragedy is the highest form of human act, and it requires this distinction because it is the poetic statement of the darkest problem that can trouble the human mind. No amount of analysis or subtle argument will make the moral world of man, in certain of its phases, other than an impenetrable mystery. Turning, however, to our story, and the poet's intention therein, we see (neglecting the insoluble element of the problem) how he would indicate to us the need of mutual support for working out the life-problem. It has been decreed in the destiny that formed them and brought them together, that these two, Faust and Gretchen, are essentially necessary to each other : that, for Gretchen, there is no growth without Faust, for Faust, no salvation without Gretchen. If the poet says anything plainly, it is this—

Here are two natures, which are to be brought out of their torpor through suffering—there is but one possibility for Faust's unfolding—to pass through every form of human experience till he comes out of the fire, refined gold. And, the only power that can sustain him in the trial is an *absolutely unselfish love*, and if that talisman be not found, he is eternally lost. And, for Gretchen, there is an alternative equally certain, though not apprehended by the reason, only felt with the heart—either to crush the impulses which draw her to the broader

nature, that comes within her sphere, to have the wedding wreath and spend her life in some small circle of village routine, ending, as her mother does, with little narrow ideas, and the unreflecting church piety, or to follow where love beckons, and wear, not the myrtle-wreath, but, the black cap of the infanticide. Not her conscious will but her unconscious feeling chose the latter course, and we have seen the close of one-half of her life-drama.

KIRAN CHANDRA MUKHOPADHYAYA, M.A.

“In Lighter Vein.”

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

There is a current saying that humanity reveals itself in fragments. But, if those fragments be collected into a mass, it will be a standing type of perfect humanity. And, it is for presenting before the world that ideal, that the innumerable biographers, in different countries, have tried and are still trying their level best to collate these interspersed fragments. But, as biographers are few, while men are many, it will not be an egoistic vanity if I be the biographer of myself, without waiting (most perhaps fruitlessly) for any in the future. If I am asked, why I add one more fragment to the already existing many, my answer is, that God has sent us here, not only to make *ourselves*, but also to make *others*. Pricked up by such a noble prompting to edify the helpless multitudes, I have taken upon myself, rather willingly, the supreme task of letting the world know what I *am*, and what I *am capable* of,—the actuality combined with limitless potentiality,—that I have commenced writing this life. But, nevertheless, I shall try my best to expose the actual aspect also, without the least exaggeration or depreciation.

I am informed that it was in the year 18—, in the month of September, that I first saw the light. Human recollection cannot stretch so far as right up to the time of birth, and whatever information I shall be able to place before my readers, will be from the talks of my mother and grandmother, the two unimpeachable sources of the domestic informations of the past. I have heard that I was born on the Sabbathday—(a patent symbolic expression for the weekly cessation of out daily duties)—and, although my christian readers will consider it to be an auspicious day, yet this alleged privilege of being sent to this world on that sacred moment has been questioned in many quarters, and has been ruled by myself, times without number. On Sabbathday was I born, and my

Sabbathday never leaves me. My whole life has been one continuous stretch of that sacred day—an utter cessation of all extra-organic activities—and a faithful adherence to this time-honoured custom of disengaging from every work. Thus the day of my birth was a cursed blessing to me.

I was born—but, only to grow up into a full-blown child. Woe to man, that Infancy never lingers, it ever passes away, as everything sublunary does. This period of transition had been an eventful time in my life—it practically, and effectually too, set the tone of my life *to be*. Events, I have heard, had occurred at that memorable period, events, which, if fully narrated by a powerful pen, will swell into volumes. But, the tenacity of my recollection will be fully revealed to my admiring readers, when I tell them that, all those events are cleanly swept away from my mind, except two very nude facts, viz., that once I slipped in mire, while bound for school, and that, on another occasion, I broke my father's mirror. If I look back through the sweeping vistas of my past life, those two events stand out in bold relief, while others seem to be clothed with an undefined vague oblivion. Yet, I have a dim consciousness, that the period in question had been an eventful period in my life.

It is sometime about this period, that my father entrusted my rudimentary education in the hands of a bearded, middle-sized gentleman, who used to come to our house both morning and evening. Even though quite an age has passed since that time, I can yet recollect that sour face that used to grin at me, whenever I declined to act up to his words. I do not know what the real fact was, but, the idea of a tutor or pedagogue is so mixed up with something like disagreeableness, specially at a time like that, that it is impossible to help being swayed by a traditional prepossession in the mind. However, as I could not belie the traditions of the human species, I looked up to that ancient tutor of mine, with feelings, which were anything but agreeable. I almost blush to admit that I am told that once I interchanged the relation between my venerable tutor and myself, and had been bold enough to treat *him* with his ferule. This *absurd* story has often been hammered into my ears, but trusting to my infallible memory, I as often repudiated the statement as being utterly false, preposterous and totally alien to my natural instinct. But, even if this story is to be believed in, I think I can justify my conduct on the occasion not only by examples of honourable precedence, but *morally too* by quoting a line from the scripture, viz., "He is wise, who looks upon others, exactly like himself."

But, the child grows into a boy—how swiftly do our days pass away! what was an infant yesterday is a boy today; and what is a boy today will be an old man tomorrow. Today, you speak glibly with your youthful jollity, tomorrow will your voice be hushed into an everlasting silence. Today the world rolls

on with its compact volume, tomorrow will it meet with its final crash. Change, change, and eternal change is the one supreme, ruling principle of this world. *Sic transit gloria mundi*. The blessed childhood is gone to give place to boyhood.

Fed and pampered as I was, I began to increase both horizontally and vertically ; or in other words, I grew up into what is called "a boy." It was at this period, that I began to get that part of my academic education, which is generally imparted in schools. The questionable receptivity of my mind makes it a point of contention whether I had actually derived any benefit by going through that long course of training. In fact, my whole school-life had been one mighty struggle between my strong inclination to keep away from the books and a tremendous impact of examinations, which forced me to look over the pages blankly.

But, let us pass on. I have dwelt rather at length on my life hitherto ; but, the event of the rest of it shall be narrated very swiftly, and as briefly as possible. Like Sir Walter Scott, I too had the idle curiosity of seeing how a stone thrown from the top of a hill first begins to roll rather slowly and joggedly along the inclined precipice until at last it moves very swiftly, and drops down suddenly to the bottom. Even so with the narration of the events in my life. I have protracted this my biography, to an unpleasant extent, and that with a very slow space, but the rest of it will be brief and abrupt.

I have passed three university examinations gradually and passed them with success. Swift, swift these days passed away ; and events are so wonderfully at a discount at this period of my academic life, that I can condense them in one sentence—*There did not happen anything worth mentioning in a biography*.

I am now arrived at the ripe old age of nearly the fifth part of a century, and the plank beneath me is tottering. How I have to pass the rest of my life, I shall withhold from my readers, as being inconsistent with all biographical formalities. My prophetic pen may, of course, indite the events *to be*, but I wisely resist the temptation.

The plank, as I have said, is tottering underneath, and the time is fast approaching when I shall have to sink beneath the sod. This sluggish spark of my life will be soon quenched to be wept over by my admirers. The constant oppressive thought of my near annihilation makes it my supreme task to bequeath lessons to posterity during my very life-time, lest they be lost to them by my speedy exit from hence. In conclusion, I call upon the younger generations of students and the generations yet to come, to place before them this ideal life of mine, fastening their eyes upon my *infinite potentiality*, which I leave them to conjecture.

A Philanthropic Auto-biographer.

THE INSTITUTE STEAMER PARTY.

The annual Steamer Party of the Calcutta University Institute came off on Sunday, the 4th December last. We regret the lateness of the hour at which the invitation cards were issued, as we were not sure of the steamer till only four days before the steamer party actually came off. This perhaps partly accounts for the comparatively small number of senior members present. However, our hearty thanks are due to the Port Commissioners for kindly lending us one of their best and fastest steamers, S.S. Buckland, free of all charges.

Long before the appointed time, bands after bands of youngmen were seen to pour forth, "like bees in spring time," attired in their happiest and gayest,—all expectant of the coming pleasure. Soon after, the decks were filled with moving heads, the Junior members coming up to the respectable number of 450. Among the Senior members present, we noticed—Dr. Choonilal Bose Rai Bahadur, Rai Bahadur Dr. Hiralal Bose, Rai Baikunthanath Bose Bahadur, Dr. Dabiruddin Ahmed, Mr. K. K. Deb, Bat-at-law, Mr. K. K. Dutt, Attorney-at-law, Mr. K. N. Chattarji, Attorney-at-law, Pundit Kali Prosonno Bhattacharji, Pundit Pramathanath Tarkabhusan, Dr. Indumadhab Mallick, Dr. J. N. Banarji, Prof. Oaten, Prof. Khagendranath Mitter, Prof. Debendranath Sen, Prof. Benoyendranath Sen, Prof. Praphulla Chandra Ghosh, Mr. S. C. Mitter, Mr. A. L. Mukharji, Mr. Gour Churn Law. The Steamer started from Chandpal Ghat at 11-30 A.M.—a snapshot being taken of the whole party on board just before the "Buckland" left the Ghat. The steamer, then, fetched headway, and the outskirts of the metropolis fading from sight, the untold treasures of nature began to rivet our attention, presenting, to the so-long-otherwise-accustomed eyes, a picture of the most seducing sweetness. The blue sky, flecked here and there with delicate white clouds, the great trees of the Botanical Gardens, towering up and carrying their crowns out of sight amongst a canopy of foliage, and the river, crisped with a thousand rippling waves of silver,—all these and many others, presenting a panorama of unspeakable delight, quickened our whole being. To minds of a naturally reflective cast, here was ample room for meditation: for, the beauties of nature lift the veil off the mind, and imagination is let loose and lost in the mazes of reflection.

In the meantime, the young members were seen dividing themselves into groups or batches. Those, who had their plans preconcerted, were found gathering round a musically-inclined friend, and entertaining themselves with his sweet airs in accompaniment of harmonium and *tabla*, others, in various groups of four, playing at cards. Those again who did not wish to mar the spontaneity of the occasion with any preconceived plans, yet found themselves somehow in the midst of enjoyments—some in small and select groups, indulging

in merry chats and happy jokes, peals of innocent laughter, at intervals, speaking the "vacant minds" that enjoyed the occasion to their hearts' content. Others of a retiring nature found out, with difficulty, a comparatively secluded nook, and made the best of the time in their own way, looking out into the scenery around, observing their fellow-members, and gravely dispensing criticism at times. Others, again, who could lay their hands on nothing else, sat by the various card and music parties, and partook of the pleasures of them, passively by looking at the games and listening to the music, and actively with their suggestions and enthusiastic outbursts. Some solitary instances might also be found of men fretting over the disappointing absence of some expected friends, and averring, while bumper-deep in the festivities of the occasion, that nothing gave them any pleasure on account of the friend's absence. Then again, the whole party might be seen to break up again, and engage in other amusements; sometimes the more mischievous of them making themselves merry at the expense of some unfortunate, good-natured friend, fooling him up to the top of his bent, and bursting forth in an obstreperous laughter.

At 1-30 P.M., light refreshments were served out to all the members, junior and senior—Graduate Brothers supplying us food for the former and Peliti's firm for the latter. The under-secretaries, with the help of a band of volunteers, managed the affair creditably. The gastronomical fête was a treat in itself, the survival-of-the-fittest theory being borne out in the rush and scramble, the quieter and more retiring sort of men being almost always left behind. The steamer steered back as she passed Ulubaria at about 3 P.M. The return-journey was none the less pleasant. Mr. K. K. Deb, Bar-at-law, organized a band of young men, and entertained the party with one-legged and three-legged races, any discomfiture in which being attended with loud outbursts. Tea was served to the party at 4 P.M. Then, we had recitations by Sreeman Suniti Kumar Chattopadhyaya and Mr. Basanta Mukharji from Kalidasa's *Raghuvansam* and Tennyson's *Holy Grail* respectively, and the mimicing of certain well-known Bengali actors by S. J. Phoni Bose, which were all appreciated by the audience. In fact, the whole thing was a sort of El Dorado of wit and amusement, so much so, that we were hardly conscious of the time, and found a rude shock to our enjoyments when, in the place of the amusements of the day, the sweet freshness of the air, the murmur of the falling waves and the fading purples in the sky, we found ourselves landing at the Chandpal Ghat in the midst of the business-laden city to breathe again its smoky atmosphere. The watch indicated 5 P.M., and we left the steamer after wishing "three cheers" to our beloved Secretary, with a pleasant experience of a day passed in happy mirth, which, thanks to the kind sympathy and sincere enthusiasm of our worthy Secretary and the hearty co-operation of the other organizers, was a splendid success.

M. C.

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